

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119 and receipt of certified copies of the priority documents. Additionally, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for acknowledging receipt and consideration of the documents cited by Applicants in Information Disclosure Statements by initialing the PTO-1449 Forms returned with the above-noted Official Action.

In the above-noted Official Action, the Examiner objected to the specification for an informality. Claims 1, 2, 7, 8 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over HULBERT et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,809,062). Claims 6, 9 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over UTA et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,141,337). Claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over UTA in view of KAKU et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,528,624). The Examiner indicated the allowability of claims 3-5, 11 and 12.

Initially, in response to the Statement of Reasons for Allowance in the above-noted Official Action, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. In this regard, while Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, Applicants submit that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that the basis for patentability of these claims is based on the totality of the features recited therein.

By the present amendment, Applicants have revised the specification to correct the informality objected-to by the Examiner in the outstanding Official Action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objection.

Upon entry of the present amendment, without acquiescing in the propriety of the outstanding objections, claims 3-5, 11 and 12 will have been amended, and claims 1-2, 6-10 and 13-14 will have been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to claims 3-5, 11 and 12 are being made to ensure that the claimed features are not interpreted as "means plus function" or "steps of" recitations. Additionally, Applicants have amended claims 3-5, 11 and 12 to more clearly recite the features therein. At least in view of the Examiner's indication of the allowability of the subject matter recited in the combinations of claims 3-5, 11 and 12, Applicants respectfully request entry of the present amendment and an indication of the allowability of each of the claims now pending.

Applicants submit that the herein-contained amendments should not be considered an indication of Applicants' acquiescence in the propriety of the outstanding rejections. Rather, the herein-contained amendments should be considered to have been made only for the purpose of expediting the prosecution of the present application and obtaining early allowance of the subject matter recited in claims 3-5, 11 and 12.

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Accordingly, for at least the above-noted reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections of claims 1 and 8 and the outstanding objections to claims 4, 5, 10 and 11, as well as an indication of the allowability of each claim pending in the present application.

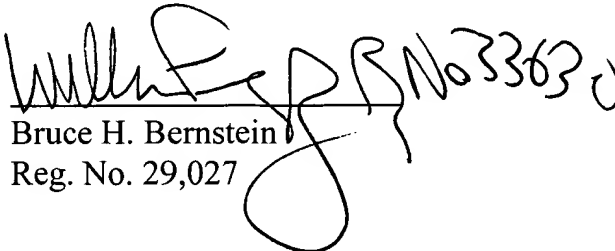
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have amended the claims to more clearly recite the features of the claims. Accordingly, at least in view of the Examiner's previous indication of the allowability of the subject matter recited in claims 3-5, 11 and 12, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding rejections.

Any amendments to existing claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
K. ANDO et al.


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